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Mrs T McGregor
Acting Headteacher
Etching Hill CofE (C) Primary School
Penk Drive North
Etching Hill
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Staffordshire
WS15 2XY

Dear Mrs McGregor

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 18 September 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit.

Following the inspection in January 2008 the school experienced a turbulent period, with a significant number of staff changes, and disruption to classes. The deputy headteacher was absent on long term sick leave from the end of February, returning to the school in June. In April the headteacher began a period of absence, also on long term sick leave. At the beginning of the summer term, you started work at the school as acting headteacher, for two and a half days each week. From 1 September you have been working at the school on a full time basis. An acting deputy headteacher joined the school in February, initially on a part time basis. This post became full time from April. Five teachers joined the school at the beginning of the autumn term.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection on 15-16 January 2008, the school was asked to:

- Accelerate pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics and ensure their work is sufficiently challenging
- Improve the quality of teaching, including marking pupils' work and use target setting more effectively to raise standards
- Improve the knowledge and skills of middle managers
- Make certain all statutory requirements are met.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement. Statutory requirements are met in relation to the school's race equality policy and safeguarding children.

The quality of teaching is improving and pupils are receiving clearer direction about how to improve their work. Target setting is used in each year group to reinforce key learning objectives and remind pupils about what they are expected to achieve. Significant improvements have been made to the use of assessment information to track pupils' progress and hold teachers to account for the achievements of the pupils in their care. These are all important developments, given the uncertainties facing the school during the spring and summer terms.

However, pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics is not yet accelerating at a sufficiently speedy rate. While there are pockets of good performance in each year group, too many pupils are currently underachieving, particularly in writing. The English curriculum is not matched well enough to what the pupils need to learn in order to make more rapid progress in the application of key skills, for example when writing at length. Similarly pupils' work is not always planned well enough to take account of their different starting points and capabilities.

You and the acting deputy headteacher form a strong and positive partnership, providing clarity, sense of purpose and a clear educational direction for the school. Under your careful guidance middle managers have gained new skills and knowledge and are having a more positive impact in their role as subject leaders. Staff morale is high and team spirit is developing well. A sense of collective responsibility and individual accountability is becoming embedded among all staff. As a result of this inspection you are revising the programme for monitoring teaching and learning, to ensure that it is sufficiently rigorous and relentless in pursuit of eliminating remaining weaknesses.

The local authority (LA) is meeting many of the commitments set out in its statement of action. LA officers have provided good support to stabilise and improve the school's leadership and establish more robust systems for tracking pupils' progress. Nevertheless the LA has been less successful in evaluating the school's progress and providing clear priorities for continued improvement.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Watters
Her Majesty's Inspector